Make the Old
Home Bright

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No House is too Old to be
Wired for Electricity

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IN the days of my boyhood I often used to visit a famous old house, pleasantly placed on the banks of a broad, flowing river, near the shores of the sea. On its face it bore in iron letters the venerable date 1713. Two oak trees that guarded its approach were certainly of an equal age, as was also the hedge of boxwood trees that enclosed the spacious lawn and croquet ground. A swing—a real swing, such as a boy loves, with long ropes tied high in the branches of a tree—impressed the scene on my youthful memory—this and the "teeter" board on the wide piazza.

But inside the house how much more there was to delight the heart of any child, or man or woman! The accumulated smells of generations of sea-traders was over everything—the faded silk hangings from China, the solid uncomfortable

furniture, worm eaten and stained with age, the overflowing closets and cupboards where were mixed in almost inextricable confusion a grandmother's bridal dress with an old sou'wester and modern dressing gown, ginger jars and tallow moulds and priceless China dishes, swords and dirks from Spain and the Levant, and the side arms my uncle wore when he was killed in the battle of Mobile Bay.

India, Asia, China and Peru for many generations had each contributed their mite of relic or romance to the making of this New England home. And America had given it the hearts of oak, the sturdy characters, the strength and courage that had made the conquests possible. Now America had given it something new. I heard one day with a feeling of deep sorrow that the youngest generation was advocating the use of new-fangled inventions; that a motor car was already installed in the old outbuilding where for years had stood a coach that George Washington once used. And then sorrow of sorrows, I heard that electric lights

had been installed in the house, because they were so cheap and safe! Cheap forsooth! I would have burned whale oil at ten dollars a gallon rather than desecrate those old beamed ceilings with electric lights, or tear up a floor to lay a wire.

I recalled the nights of my childhood, with the old kerosene lamps that had a smell that was all their own. We could not turn them down low because of the smell; if we turned them up high and left the room for a moment, we could be sure to return to find them belching black smoke and soot. Then we would throw open all the windows and "air out." We used "Camphene" before we had kerosene, but upstairs in the bedrooms no lamps were allowed because of the danger of fire. There was a row of candlesticks downstairs from which everyone helped himself when he went to bed. How well I remember my grandfather every night punctually at nine, reaching up for his candlestick and saying: "Come Mary, it's time to take the silver and go aloft."

The guttering candles with their grotesque shadows, their snuffers and hot, melting candle-grease, the constant admonition "not to set anything on fire," seemed as much a part of the old house as the portraits, or the four-poster beds or the flowered carpets. I did not want to see electric lights there.

But strangely, I was converted and finally convinced. I was induced to pay the old house a visit. I talked with the youngsters who were doing these things, and I guess they were right. Every generation in the past has added something to the old home—things from all over the world that were new in their day, if they are old now. The young ones must add something. Theirs is a wonderful invention. It will harmonize with the rest, just as everything else that was new has done. It is also so very much safer and cheaper. And if the old home is not made comfortable and attractive for the people who are living there, they will go off, and the family will break up and the home decay. So I guess it is better that they did put in electricity.

They told me it happened in this way: One day a man from the electric lighting company called on them with a proposal for a complete electrical installation. He went about the house tapping the walls and sounding the ceilings, and explained how easily every wire could be run on the inside between the beams, without injury to the walls or ceiling, without even the removal of a carpet.

The proposal seemed at first absurd in the extreme,—this old-fashioned house, built more than 200 years ago as solid as the hills, with every beam and board of solid oak or black walnut. The family was willing to wager that in all the substantial structure no hole could be found large enough to introduce a hand, and yet when they were persuaded to try, it was found to be entirely practical. Without even the removal of a carpet, electric fixtures were placed on the porch, in the dining room and parlor, in the kitchen and in each of the bedrooms.

The great economy in the cost of light is made possible by the use of the new and efficient EDISON MAZDA lamp. It has a filament of the metal

tungsten which gives practically three times as much light as the now old-fashioned carbon lamp. It is certainly one of the seven wonders of this age of wonders.

And now the family are doing almost all of their cooking with G-E heating devices also. They say that next Spring they are going to put out every fire in the house and not build another until late Fall.

I wonder what our fathers and grandfathers would say! I wish they might contrast the old and the new. The monthly bills for light are even less than they formerly paid for kerosene and whale oil. I sometimes think I can picture my grandfather pressing the button of an electric switch and standing with his hands folded under his coat-tails in wondering admiration of the flood of electric light thrown down upon him from the ceiling. I can almost fancy him saying, "All this light from a wire concealed in the wall! What next?"

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